



60th Anniversary of the Korean Armistice

Today, on the 60th Anniversary of the Korean Armistice, I was honored to stand shoulder to shoulder with surviving Korean War veterans from the United States, the Republic of Korea, and other nations in the Demilitarized Zone to commemorate the Armistice signing that has meant stability on the Peninsula for 60 years.


It was an incredibly moving experience, and as I stood together with our Allies, I realized that while the North Koreans were celebrating war, we were celebrating peace.

In contrast to the militancy that has kept North Korea from joining the community of nations and from promoting the well-being of its 24 million citizens, South Korea's vigilant security provided the foundation for this country to build a miracle of development and prosperity.

Today's ceremony was held in the Freedom House in Panmunjom overlooking the Demilitarized Zone that divides the Korean Peninsula. Not far in the distance lie the front lines of North Korea's 1.2 million man force, an army that is constantly modernizing its tactical and strategic weaponry, at the expense of its people's welfare. As formidable as the North Korean military is, one strength that it cannot call upon, is an international alliance which has maintained stability on the Peninsula for 60 years. The Republic of Korea is often called the "Miracle on the Han." It is a prosperous, secure, and peaceful country, not through threats and possession of nuclear weapons, but through their embrace of international norms and democratic rule for the benefit of its citizens.

One thing that I have learned in over 38 years in the military is that peace does not come cheap, and it doesn't come easy. U.S. and Allied forces on the Peninsula have to be ready to "Fight Tonight" if North Korea should attack. Despite these difficulties, the Republic of Korea has done a spectacular job of making the most of the opportunities that the last 60 years of stability have offered. It has made the sacrifices of our allies and veterans count, and I am grateful for that today.

I am proud and humbled by the past and present selfless service of American, Korean, and our partner nations Service Members and Civilians and their contribution to the stability and prosperity of the Republic of Korea.


JAMES D. THURMAN
General, U.S. Army
Commander